

For Immediate Release
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Farm Groups to Congress: Don't Cut Ag

WASHINGTON (March 1, 2004) – National Farmers Union and 12 other farm groups today urged congressional budget writers to oppose cuts to agricultural programs in the fiscal year 2005 budget resolution.

The letter, sent to members of the House and Senate, encouraged opposition to any resolution that would incorporate agriculture program cuts or reconciliation instructions to the agriculture authorizing committee.

“Now is not the time to reduce funding for valuable food and agricultural programs,” said NFU President Dave Frederickson. “Many farmers, ranchers and rural communities struggle with inadequate income, infrastructure, schools, health care, transportation and other basic services. Our national budget should help create opportunities and improve the quality of life for all citizens, including those in rural America.”

Frederickson said the U.S. Department of Agriculture will take the largest hit of any cabinet-level department under the administration's FY05 budget proposal. Under President Bush's plan, USDA's 2005 budget authority for discretionary programs would be reduced about \$1.7 billion or 8.1 percent compared to the spending levels adopted for the current fiscal year. When the increases for Homeland Security functions within the agriculture budget are considered, the cuts for traditional USDA programs climb to nearly \$2.1 billion or 10 percent of total discretionary spending authority.

The groups asked Congress to uphold the commitments made in the 2002 farm law. “Efforts to enhance economic opportunities for America's farmers and rural communities require that the federal budget be able to accommodate a meaningful economic safety net for producers, expand our nation's resource conservation, renewable energy and agricultural research activities while addressing a broad range of rural development and global hunger needs,” the letter said.

American Corn Growers Association, American Farm Bureau Federation, Farm Credit Council, National Association of Wheat Growers, National Cotton Council, National Grain Sorghum Producers, National Grange, National Grape Cooperative, R-CALF USA, Soybean Producers of America, U.S.A. Rice Federation and U.S. Rice Producers Association joined National Farmers Union on today's letter.